

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, ranking members Hwang , Somers and Petit and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Joni Lowe. I am a Brookfield resident. I am the Manager of Operations at CT Against Gun Violence.

It's good to see bills have been forwarded in this committee and others that include provisions to address the crisis of community gun violence in Connecticut: HB-5397, SB-477 and SB-16. Yes, it is a crisis. All have elements worthy of your consideration.

I am testifying in favor of the language in HB-5397, An Act Declaring Gun Violence a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Office of Gun Violence Prevention. It includes five important points that should be included in whichever bill is voted out of your committee:

- It declares gun violence a public health crisis.
- It houses the solution in the Department of Public Health where it can have the greatest impact.
- It has mechanisms to include voices of those most impacted by community gun violence.
- It includes a robust data gathering and research capacity to drive evidence-informed grant-making.
- It calls for funding commensurate with the magnitude of the crisis.

CT parents are afraid to let their children out of their homes to play outside and to go to school. **Children living in CT** are afraid to leave their homes to play outside and go to school. There's a fear that the child will get shot at and never return home. Their fear is real and understandable.

10 children, 1 to 17 years of age died last year due to gun violence in CT. This includes a 3 year old, Randell Jones, Jr. in the list of gun deaths. This is atrocious and unacceptable.

Our CT children experience lockdown drills as ordinary life at school. This can't be the ordinary.

We live in CT, one of the top 5 richest states in the US, and some of our children are afraid to go outside to play and to go to school.

Action needs to be taken now. Gun violence is an urgent public health crisis that demands the state to invest more to save lives. On average, someone in CT is murdered with a gun once every three days.

Please make a difference, make changes, and save lives.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Sincerely,

Joni Lowe  
Brookfield, CT